

Beacon Falls Conservation Commission
10 Maple Ave.
Beacon Falls, CT 06403



BEACON FALLS CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Monthly Meeting Minutes
January 5, 2015
(Draft Copy-Subject to Revision)

1. Call to Order/ Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Diane Betkoski called the meeting to order at 6:40 PM.

Commissioners present: Vice Chairman Mike Bouchard, Michael Opuszynski,
Sophie Zyla

Commissioner absent: Jeff Kean, Secretary Tanya Gutierro

2. Approval of Minutes – October 6 & December 1, 2014 meetings

Motion to accept the December 1, 2014 meeting minutes: Bouchard/Zyla; all aye.

Due to lack of quorum of commissioners the October 6, 2014 meeting minutes could not be approved.

3. Correspondence -

- budget status as of 12/31/14
- Jan-Feb 2015 Audubon magazine
- letter from Naugatuck Valley Audubon Society - an appeal and notice that the group is interested in working on projects in area towns. Sophie Zyla is the POC. The letter continued thanking the Conservation for its support and membership. The group is interested in local projects such as installing blue bird houses and fishing line recycle bins. They have 426 members and noted that the Naugatuck Valley Audubon Society is part of the National Audubon society. Through their projects they hope to drum up volunteers and new board members.

S. Zyla noted that she advertises the Naugatuck Valley Audubon Society and their projects via Facebook posts.

M. Opuszynski commented that it would be a good idea to participate in a joint activity with another local conservation group.

M. Bouchard concurred that a bigger group working on a project would have a bigger impact.

S. Zyla is working on setting up two groups of young bird watchers: 5-8 years and 9-12 years to possibly explore at Matthies Park. She contacted the Beacon Falls Library to share this information as well as having it posted on the Friends' Facebook page.

D. Betkoski agreed with the Naugatuck Valley Audubon intentions and suggested mapping these projects against actionable items for the Conservation Commission goals but would need more specifics.

D. Betkoski asked S. Zyla to provide a summary of the potential projects over the next quarter and publicize them, including her membership as a Beacon Falls Conservation Commission member and listing which potential projects could be done in Beacon Falls.

4. **Comments from the Public** - none

5. **Membership Update** -

- Notice for recruitment:

D. Betkoski explained the difficulty in getting an ad in the paper seeking potential Conservation Commission members.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will submit an article directly to Citizen's News seeking to fill the vacancy on the Conservation Commission.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will send S. Zyla the verbiage about the Conservation Commission vacancy for her to post on Facebook.

- Nominations of officers

- Chairman Diane Betkoski called for nominations from the floor for the Chairman position.

Motion to nominate Diane Betkoski to continue as Chairman; **Opuszynski/Zyla;** no further nominations; all aye.

- Chairman Diane Betkoski called for nominations from the floor for the Vice Chair position.

Motion to nominate Mike Bouchard to continue as Vice Chairman; **Opuszynski/Zyla;** no further nominations; all aye.

- Chairman Diane Betkoski called for nominations from the floor for the Secretary position.

Motion to nominate Tanya Gutierro to continue as Secretary; **Opuszynski/Zyla;**
Motion to nominate Sophie Zyla as Secretary; **Bouchard/Opuszynski;**

Discussion ensued about the duties of the secretary and stressed that attendance at meetings is extremely important. The position may include maintenance of the Conservation Commission web site.

Voting for Secretary position:

Tanya Gutierro - none

Sophie Zyla- Opuszynski, Bouchard, Betkoski

ACTION: S. Zyla will look at the Conservation Commission web site to see if she is able to maintain it. D. Betkoski will email S. Zyla administration information for the web site.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will ask the Board of Selectmen if the Conservation Commission is allowed to have a Facebook page.

6. Budget Update

There is \$934 remaining in clerk budget line item

There is a balance of \$1,712 in operating expenses budget line item

The \$500 budgeted for the land acquisition fund was transferred to the Conservation Commission bank account.

7. Land Use Committee

Per M. Opuszynski, the committee has not met. The first meeting is scheduled for January 21; will meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month.

8. Open Space Management

- Open Space Inventory & Future Planning -

M. Opuszynski wants to put together a subcommittee of 3 members that could meet after the regular monthly Conservation Commission meeting every other month.

ACTION: M. Opuszynski will email members asking for volunteers to be on the Open Space Management Subcommittee.

- Open Space Preservation Fund - Ordinance Update - status report
D. Betkoski reported that she was awaiting feedback from the Board of Selectmen on suggestions she submitted.
- 18 Westview Road. Mesa Excavation & Paving, Inc.

The Conservation Commission had received an offer from Mesa Excavation & Paving to donate parcel of land noted as 18 Westview Road.

D. Betkoski asked Town Clerk Len Greene for the deed; he indicated that this parcel was not turned over to town, and the town has no deed for this property.

D. Betkoski suggested the Conservation Commission respond to Mesa Excavation & Paving that the commission defers the decision of accepting this parcel of land to the Board of Selectmen.

S. Zyla reported that she checked on the status and wording on the deed and the tax records. She noted that the taxes were listed under Blackberry Hill owned by MWP. She added that taxes were due and there were liens on property.

9. Outreach Activities

- Recycling Project

D. Betkoski reviewed the Conservation Commission's 2014 goals and highlighted those accomplished including submitting a press release for Earth Day, a booth at the River Fest event, tracking down deeds to town owned open space, and working with other boards: especially P&Z.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will send the letter from Attorney Byrne to the new P&Z chairman.

M. Opuszynski stressed the need to have a plan for open space.

S. Zyla noted that state grants are available for towns to obtain open space, however there needs to be a plan for open space.

M. Bouchard added that when the Conservation Commission has an open space plan, it can immediately respond to developers regarding their donation of open space.

D. Betkoski suggested that local property owners may also be interested in donating open space land parcels to the Conservation Commission and therefore not be responsible for the taxes on the property.

- Citizen's News - Conservation Awareness articles

M. Opuszynski agreed on the importance of having regular articles in the newspaper ("Conservation Corner") about information on town history, tips on conservation and recycling and any collaboration with conservation groups in neighboring towns.

S. Zyla provided copies of a litter brochure she created. This could possibly be used as handouts at the River Fest in May.

10. Projects of Interest

- Towantic Hill Power Plant

A meeting will be held this month; the FAA is involved.
The Conservation Commission will continue to monitor its status.

- Bethany Development - nothing to report

D. Betkoski noted that Bruce Loomis from the Bethany Conservation Commission was keeping her and M. Bouchard apprised of any activity on this project.

M. Opuszynski noted that he is working on a sign as a thank you for the Girl Scout troop for their help as Lantern Ridge stewards. He will bring the sketch he designed to a future meeting. This sign would be posted at Lantern Ridge. The troop plans to continue to maintain this parcel of town open space.

11. Payment of Invoices -

- Clerical invoice –
Motion to accept Clerk Martha Melville's invoice requesting payment of \$68.75 for the December 1, 2014 session and associated administrative work and pay the bill as submitted: Bouchard/Opuszynski; all aye.

12. Announcements/Adjournment

The next meeting will be held on Monday, February 2, 2015 at 6:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 PM: Opuszynski/Zyla; all aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Melville
Clerk

CC: Conservation Commission members
Board of Selectmen
Planning & Zoning
Inland Wetlands
Park & Rec Commissions